

STRATEGY
RESEARCH
PROJECT

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**DESERT STORM: VICTORY PARADES
AND SECOND THOUGHTS**

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL LAWRENCE J. SOWA
United States Army

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Lieutenant Colonel Lawrence J. Sowa
United States Army

Colonel Giles Crider
Project Advisor

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U.S. Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013

ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Lawrence J. Sowa (LTC), USA

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The Gulf War was a resounding military victory that clearly met the national objectives set by President Bush. However, it quickly became subject to intense post-war critical review. Was the war a strategic success? What were the factors that contributed to its controversial nature? This paper argues that Desert Storm was a "limited war" success. Because of the restrictive nature of this form of conflict, it will be inevitably subject to critical review and revisionism.

INTRODUCTION

The Gulf War was fought as a "limited war" that focused on specific objectives, clearly established by the National Command Authority. The war was an absolute military success. However, it quickly became subject to intense critical review and post-war critiques by journalists, historians, and some military strategists. A flurry of post-war books and articles flooded the public, decrying the early termination of the war and keying on several political and tactical shortfalls: failure to destroy the Republican Guard; failure to dismantle nuclear, chemical, and biological production facilities; failure to alleviate Saddam's atrocities directed at the Kurds and Shi'ites; and, of course, failure to overthrow Saddam's regime. Are these criticisms valid? Were they specified goals of the Gulf War? Or are such shortfalls inevitable in "limited wars"? In fact, was the Gulf War a successful "limited war"? This study addresses these issues.

All of the President's declared objectives were accomplished by means of the Gulf War. However, "limited wars" leave a sense of incompleteness; they invite second guessing. They yield unfinished business. The Gulf War provides a dramatic, recent case study of limited war. This study will delve into the historical underpinnings of "limited war" and provide a philosophical background for

evaluating the Gulf War. Was the Gulf War actually a "limited war"? Or was it closer to unrestrained Air-Land campaign? If it was fought as a "limited war", how did the National Command Authority and its commanders shape the war to meet the reality of political restrictions while garnering such a decisive victory. What were the national objectives? Were they met? What factors invited critics to challenge the military success achieved in Desert Storm? Should the U.S. have formally anticipated these correlative issues in determining our national objectives? This study argues that military solutions, in and of themselves, do not resolve larger diplomatic and political problems. However, the application of military power through the use of limited war can be an effective instrument of National Policy.

This Strategic Research Project (SRP) will be divided into five sections. First, a historical review offers a background on "limited war". Second, it describes the President's campaign to energize international and domestic support required to combat the Iraqi aggression. Third, it gives an overview of military operations in the war. Fourth, it provides a critical analysis of the war's stated and implied objectives. Finally, it responds to the open questions that critics have raised regarding this triumph without victory.

A TASTE OF VICTORY

8 June 1991 was a special day in history. A boisterous and jubilant nation lined the curbs of

Constitution Avenue in Washington D.C. to cheer and publically welcome the victorious armed forces who served in the Gulf. It felt good! The best description of this event comes from Rick Atkinson in Crusade: "Parade Saturday..June 8, 1991..dawn, warm and clear. Morning light seeped across the city, gilding the dark Potomac, glinting from the Capital dome, unmasking the gargoyles crouched atop the buttresses of the National Cathedral. As the rising sun inched higher, the long shadow of the Washington Monument drew back, like a sword slipping into a scabbard. Happy battalions of spectators, the vanguard of a crowd that would swell to 800,000 people, swept toward the Mall, staking out the choicest vantage points along Constitution Avenue to await the marching heroes..Washington loved a parade..now the city gathered itself once again for a pageant of power and catharsis."¹

The American people love a winner. At last, after 40 years of post-Korea and Vietnam dissatisfaction and reticence, the nation finally embraced its military. Both the military and the nation savored the victory. The services had come full-circle back from the mutual bitterness associated with Korea and Vietnam. In both of these actions the U.S. achieved significant tactical success, but lacked a strategy for victory. In On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Gulf War, Harry Summers describes this paradox in a chapter entitled "Tactical Victory-Strategic Defeat."² So the Gulf victory was especially

satisfying for the military's senior leadership, many of whom had experienced firsthand the public indifference and resentment associated with the Indo-China war.

The American public offered total acceptance, gratitude, pride, and a shared sense of "absolute victory". But, this didn't last long. Almost simultaneously with the peace came the barrage of post-war critiques. On the afternoon of 27 February 1991, President Bush and his advisors agreed that the nation's objectives had been met and agreed to end the war. The decision was made in close consultation with his military experts, General Colin Powell (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) and General Norman Schwarzkopf (Commander of the United States Central Command).³ The following day the cease-fire took effect at 8 A.M. From that point until the present, many still question whether the U.S. achieved any worthwhile goals in the Desert Storm victory. Such doubts are commonly associated with warfare restricted to limited objectives.

THEORY OF LIMITED WAR

Carl von Clausewitz's early 19th century observations have laid the theoretical groundwork for contemporary American military strategy. He defined war as "an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will."⁴ War itself can be viewed on a continuum, from peace enforcement, on one extreme, to total war, on the other. In total war, a nation commits itself to the maximum exertion of its economic, political, and military power, dedicated to the absolute

destruction of its adversary. Over 150 years ago, Clausewitz described total war as those that have large goals and strong motives. Total wars tend to mobilize a society's resources and generally are pursued through bitter, intense fighting. Limited wars pursue lesser goals and usually produce only limited damage. Operation Desert Storm definitely fits into the more limited category.

Clausewitz also linked the execution of war with political intentions. In On War, he states that "the political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose."⁵ He clearly saw limited war as a lesser form of conflict, but he saw it as a legitimate method to project the national will. In the case of the Gulf conflict, war was the last resort of the international community in response to Saddam's aggression.

The United States has a history of participating in "limited wars." Early American military strategists were heavily influenced by the history of European conflicts. However, the U.S. never really endured the strife of a "total war" until 1940. (Our Civil War was excluded because it failed to meet the criteria of total mobilization.) A more common practice was to engage in lesser levels of conflict, such as raids, border excursions, expeditionary actions. The Revolutionary War, War of 1812, Mexican American War, Korea, and Vietnam were all "limited wars". Several factors have led to the U.S. choice to enter into

limited wars: geographic isolation, political autonomy (limited military alliances), and a populace that favored economic expansion to foreign military engagements. For these reasons and others, the U.S. has a history of engaging in limited actions, as opposed to nationalistic wars conducted on a grand scale.

A host of modern theorists have been proponents of more flexible and less lethal forms of warfare. Many of these writers have influenced U.S. strategic policy and have championed the use of a "limited war" option. One of the more recent proponents of limited war is Robert Osgood. During the 1950's the Cold War dominated strategic thinking. Advising against a nuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union, Robert Osgood advocated limited war as a strategy that could address regional conflicts short of total war. In Limited War, he observes that "the history of war itself shows that men have always had a significant choice in the conduct of war.. the limited war of the 18th century was a reaction to the limited wars that preceded it ..in the 19th century limitation was a product of diplomatic skills".⁶ He contends that failures of statesman may have been the catalyst for the world's total wars. He clearly advocates that:

political authority should work diligently to place limits on the political objectives of war and further, that a nation's leaders must inform the enemy of the limited nature of their objectives. The rationale is based on the notion that nations tend to tailor military effort according to the value of the objectives. The more valuable the objective, the more willing a nation is⁷ likely to be to raise the level of violence to attain it.⁷

Limited war has been popular with strategic leaders who wanted to conserve resources and lower risks. The war in the Gulf clearly assumed these characteristics.

Osgood directly influenced the strategists of his age by providing a rationale to shift the American experience from its brief contact with total war (WWII) to a more focused and less lethal form of warfare, a limited option. Despite its popularity in the 1950's, many of the later strategists criticized Osgood for his tendency to key exclusively on the diplomatic use of national power to the exclusion of the military option.

Another recent military strategist, George Stotser, offers the following definition of limited war:

one in which the belligerents restrict the purposes for which they fight to concrete, well-defined objectives that do not demand the utmost military effort of which the belligerents are capable and that can be accommodated in negotiated settlement. Generally speaking, a limited war actively involves only two major belligerents in the fighting. The battle is confined to a local geographical area and directed against selected targets, primarily those of military importance.⁸

Such warfare is focused and restricted to specific goals and political objectives. Again, the Gulf War fits this definition in that it had strictly defined goals and targets, and it is restricted by geographic boundaries.

Likewise, American theorist Arthur Brown contends that "mass destruction and to a lesser degree, rapid, worldwide communications and world organizations have influenced national decision-makers to reexamine total war concepts."⁹ Since 1960, the U.S. has sought to develop a policy that

would allow military power to be an effective instrument of national power. Further, "It must be employed in a manner that will insure protection of national interests while minimizing the risk of general nuclear war."¹⁰

The Gulf War was fought as a modified and specifically tailored "limited war", restricted by Coalition norms and refined national objectives. Even so, past U.S. attempts at conducting "limited war" operations have not been altogether successful. Military operations in Korea and Vietnam failed to produce overall strategic success. In both conflicts, military force was poorly applied, and the military actions did not focus on key national objectives and strategies for victory. In his recent article "The Backlash of Limited War", Captain Hillen claims "the experience in Vietnam caused the Army to reject gradualism in the application of force and precipitated efforts to reinstate the necessity for decisive and overwhelming victory through battle."¹¹ He contends that the Vietnam era was the great test case for limited war in the Cold War era.. It failed. He notes that many military leaders have become leery of the normal restraints and gradualism historically associated with "limited wars."

In the case of Desert Storm, General Colin Powell initially counseled against military intervention. But he allowed that if "force is to be used, it should be overwhelming, and its application should be decisive and preferably short. Military intervention should not be

undertaken unless the outcome was all but guaranteed."¹² This position on the application of decisive force was later labeled the "Powell Doctrine." Desert Storm was prosecuted as a "limited war." But it was fought under conditions that offered unhindered freedom to the military to execute the war.

Other indicators reveal that the war was fought as a "limited war." Total U.S. assets were not fully utilized. The President restricted the effort to specific objectives, the industrial base was not surged, there was limited mobilization, the military was selectively employed, and targets were restricted. For these reasons the Gulf War meets the criteria as a "limited war." It should be evaluated in that context.

ADDRESSING THE TRILOGY

Clausewitz introduced theory of a paradoxical trinity in On War.¹³ The trinity consisted of the people, the commander and his army, and the government. He contends that the three should be held in balance and that the synchronization of all three is the key to success in the conduct of war.

On 2 August 1990 the forces of Iraq crossed the international border into Kuwait. We had miscalculated Saddam's intent and failed diplomatically to raise the stakes high enough to prevent this incursion into the sovereign nation of Kuwait. For months previous to his initiative, signals were being sent from Saddam's regime to

Kuwait harassing them and denying Iraq's debt to Kuwait. We had observed the movement of troops but thought it a bluff. Consensus was that Saddam would lose too much status in the Arab community by invading Kuwait. We simply failed to read the warning signs. Then we weren't in position to rebuff the invasion.

Though the U.S. government was then wallowing in another intelligence and diplomatic failure, President Bush adamantly proceeded to act decisively against Iraq. On 2 August 1990, he issued Executive Order 12722 to "address the threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States posed by the invasion by Iraq."¹⁴ Additionally, in the first week of August "President Bush condemned the invasion, stating the seizure of Kuwait and potential Iraqi domination of Saudi Arabia through intimidation or invasion presented a real threat to U.S. national interests, requiring a decisive response."¹⁵ The President was quickly sowing the seeds for a military response by announcing that a vital national interest was in jeopardy. Of major concern to the U.S. and its Allies were the oil fields of Saudi Arabia. "The only thing standing between Saddam and the vast Saudi oil fields was a battalion of Saudi National Guard, fewer than 1,000 men."¹⁶

The President's strategy sought to build concentric circles of strength, with the international community constituting the outside ring and the American people and the Congress making up the inner ring.

First, he solicited support from the international community by focusing on Iraqi aggression, expansionism, control of oil (20% of the world's reserves), and intolerable human rights violations. The President had framed the threat that faced the world.

Next, he immediately initiated activity on both diplomatic and military fronts. International legitimacy was garnered from a series of United Nations Security Council Resolutions. They promulgated a combination of economic restrictions and general declarations against aggression. An economic embargo and strangling sanctions were being formulated. Resolution 660 condemned the aggression and called for an immediate withdrawal from Kuwait. Resolution 661 banned all arms sales and tightened the economic pressure on Iraq. Significantly, Russia and China supported these resolutions, despite being former trading partners to Iraq and resolute Cold War adversaries of the United States. Since the Russians and the Chinese did not veto the resolutions, the United States was free to pursue more aggressive diplomatic and military responses, such as deploying an entire Corps from Europe.

A final significant United Nations resolution (687) authorized member States to use all necessary means to uphold previous U.N. Resolutions (most important, Iraqi withdrawal) by 15 January 1991. The Administration made superb use of the media in getting their message out to the public. Selected cabinet officials and senior military

leaders appeared on the news talk shows to present and discuss the emerging strategy. The President wanted to ensure popular support if and when a military option was chosen.

The President also skillfully energized the Clausewitzian trinity (people, the commander and his army, and the government) to ensure domestic support for efforts to defend our areas of vital national interest. The Administration was aware that, to pursue a military option, a clear case would have to be made to defuse partisan politics, discount the economic sanctions, justify potential military casualties, placate the media, and generally pave the way for a violent war that could be prolonged in nature.

Efforts started as early as 26 November 1990, when the President stated the national objectives in a Newsweek Magazine interview: "first, the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Second, the restoration of Kuwait's legitimate government. Third, security and stability for the Gulf. Fourth, the protection of Americans abroad."¹⁷

In addition to these specific national objectives, he was also consistent in identifying our vital interests: access to cheap oil and stability in the Middle East. He also increased pressure for support by citing the reported civil rights violations perpetrated by the Iraqis on the Kuwaiti populace. The President likewise began to demonize Saddam as an evil despot seeking a military hegemony in the

Gulf. This demonization program promulgated both the media's and Amnesty International's reports on rapes, executions, torture, and use of hostages as shields. The post-war Department of Defense report to Congress recorded that "At the time of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, there were an estimated 3,000 Americans living in that country, in addition to thousands of other Westerners. Less than 10 days after the 8 August announcement that it had annexed Kuwait as it's 19th province, Iraqi officials began the systemic rounding-up of Western and Japanese nationals in Kuwait. They were detained in hotels in Kuwait city or transported to Baghdad."¹⁸ Thus the media and the Administration fed upon each other. The media wanted action shots to dramatize a crescendo towards crisis for the evening news, and the White House wanted to foment moral indignation at the Iraqi aggression.

The Administration also used a military measure, mobilization, to cement public commitment and support. This follows from another of the "lessons learned" from Vietnam. General Crosbie Saint, Commander of the United States Army in Europe, observed that "the early decision to call up the reserves, while probably motivated by necessity, turned out to be a major catalyst in consolidating American opinion firmly behind our strategy in the Gulf. The size of the call up meant everyone had players from their State.. the moral ascendancy that U.S. troops had when they knew their country was behind them cannot be discounted."¹⁹ The call up

literally pulled the American population into the trinity.

The second arm of the Clausewitzian "trinity" is that of the commander and his army.²⁰ President Bush was totally consistent in his role as commander. He would pursue the national objectives, but he would not micro-manage the military campaign. The President knew that the Gulf War would be fought as a coalition effort and would be a "limited war." He heeded the Clausewitzian warning that "the first, the most far-reaching act of judgement that the statesman and the commander have to make is to establish the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it, nor trying to turn it into, something alien to its character."²¹ The President and the military leadership were precise and consistent on setting the "level of conflict" and avoiding the gradualism that plagued our military efforts in Korea and Vietnam.

To energize the second arm of the "trinity", the military began a crash program to adjust and refine the Central Command's war plans for the defense of Saudi Arabia and then later, for the offensive actions to free occupied Kuwait. The first phase of the campaign, designated Operation Desert Shield, called for military enforcement of the sanctions and rapid military deployments. On 8 August 1990 the president increased the stakes by directing "that elements of the 82nd Airborne Division, as well as key elements of the United States Air Force, are arriving today to take up defensive positions in Saudi Arabia..the mission

of our troops is wholly defensive..they will not initiate hostilities, but they will defend themselves, the kingdom of Saudi Arabia and other friends in the Persian Gulf."²² From August 1990 to January 1991 the United States and Coalition planners prepared for war. This preparation was deliberate, comprehensive, and skillfully led by the national leadership. Once the President had committed the country and given his direction, he left the execution of the war to the professionals. The second arm of the "trinity" was in place.

The third and final arm of the "trinity" is the government. Congress became a key player in this nation's support of the Gulf War. The President accepted the gamble of soliciting formal Congressional support for offensive action against the Iraqi force illegally occupying Kuwait.

The early phases of Desert Shield were conducted with Congressional knowledge, but not with specific approval. The activities of the Administration were conducted under the President's authority as chief executive and commander-in-chief. Throughout this first phase, key Congressman were briefed on the operational issues as they matured. There was growing popular support for sanctions and the embargo, but a military offensive would be hard to sell to a partisan legislative body. In January 1991 the President weighed the options and made a decision to seek a Congressional vote of support. "After three days of debate, on January 12, 1991, the Congress voted President Bush authority to go to war

against Iraq. The "Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq" passed the Senate 52-47 and the House 250-183.²³ Now the third arm of the Clausewitzian "trinity" had entered the fray.

By mid-January 1991, President Bush had the stage set and the military machinery in place for offensive actions against Iraq. He had successfully forged a coalition based on international law, United Nations resolutions, widely shared morality, and vital national interests. He had orchestrated the "trinity" to support his stated objectives. With his house totally in order, he wisely made one final attempt to resolve the issue diplomatically. Secretary of State George Baker delivered a final ultimatum to Iraqi Foreign Minister Aziz in Switzerland on 9 January 1991. The results were predictable: Saddam rebuked the offer. Had he accepted or withdrawn even marginally (from Kuwait City), he might have achieved a strategic victory. Saddam could have claimed victory, kept the pirated Kuwaiti revenues, intimidated his neighbors, and in doing so caused the United States to expend massive resources. He even had the opportunity to strike at the U.S. center of gravity. Saddam was sure that the U.S. could not sustain a prolonged war. He had incrementally withdrawn forces, made small delayed concessions, and not overtly challenged the United States, he might have won. Perhaps the Coalition would have fragmented, or Congressional support may have wavered, and the international community might have waited on time-

consuming sanctions. The U.S. may have moved to the brink of war, but it probably would have been restrained by the Arab Coalition if Saddam had made a slight conciliatory gesture. But Saddam's window of opportunity slammed shut: He made no concessions. He practically invited the coalition response.

DESERT STORM: DECISIVE VICTORY

The Department of Defense Report Conduct of the Persian Gulf War, states it well:

The Coalition victory was impressive militarily. Iraq possessed the fourth largest army in the world, an army hardened in long years of combat against Iran..Saddam's forces possessed high-quality artillery, T-72 tanks, Mig 29 aircraft, ballistic missiles, chemical agents, and a sophisticated air defense system..Nonetheless, Iraq forces were routed in six weeks by U.S. and other Coalition forces with extraordinarily low Coalition losses..the Coalition dominated every area of warfare.. the seas belonged to the Coalition..naval units enforced the United Nations embargo and helped to deprive Iraq of outside resupplies and revenues. The early arrival of Marine Corps Maritime Prepositioning Force provided an early deterrent..the Coalition controlled the skies.. Coalition planes destroyed 41 Iraqi aircraft, crippled command and control and known unconventional weapons, and degraded the combat effectiveness of Iraqi forces..In the course of flying more than 100,000 sorties the Coalition lost only 38 fixed wing aircraft..on the ground, Coalition armored forces traveled over 250 miles in 100 hours, one of the fastest movements of armored forces in the history of combat, to execute the now famous "left hook" that enveloped Iraq's elite, specially trained and equipped Republican Guards. Shortly after the end of the war, the United States Central Command estimated that Iraq lost roughly 3,800 tanks to Coalition air and ground attack; U.S. combat losses were fifteen."²⁴

The United States suffered 613 casualties in the campaign, and the Coalition took 86,000 prisoners of war. "All but a half dozen of 43 Iraqi divisions were destroyed or too crippled to function by the time our offense

ended."²⁵ Saddam's forces were depleted by an estimated 50 to 75%.

In The Commanders, Bob Woodward noted that "the Gulf War lasted 42 days. The air phase took 38 days. The ground war took 4 days before President Bush declared a cease-fire. The Coalition forces overran Kuwait and southern Iraq, destroyed Saddam's army, routed the Republican Guard, dictated the terms of the peace, and killed tens of thousands of Iraqis. Kuwait was liberated."²⁶ Among the many successes of the campaign, the air war displayed the dominance and lethality of Coalition aircraft and tactics. The Marines were an effective wild card for General Schwarzkopf. They were quick to arrive; they conducted successful feints to fix Iraqi forces; and they spearheaded the liberation of Kuwait City.

The U.S. Army fully validated Air-Land battle doctrine. Although it was originally developed for the plains of central Europe, it was skillfully and successfully adapted to the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations. Special Operating Forces and the use of national intelligence assets also provided critical combat multipliers for the Coalition. Naval forces launched air strikes, conducted blockades, escorted shipping, and delivered massive firepower in support of Coalition ground forces. The professionalism, high morale, and leadership of the Armed Forces were key factors in the campaign's success. The "trinity" remained uniformly committed to achieving the President's stated

objectives. They had stayed the course.

Desert Storm delivered a crushing blow to Saddam's attempts at dominance in the Middle East. President Bush observed "Seven months ago, America and the World drew a line in the sand. We declared that the aggression against Kuwait would not stand, and tonight America and the World have kept their word."²⁷

OBJECTIVES MET

In a speech to the nation on 8 August 1990, President Bush laid out the objectives: "Four simple principles guide our policy. First, we seek the immediate unconditional and complete withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Second, Kuwait's legitimate government must be restored to replace the puppet regime. And third, my administration, as has been the case with every president from Roosevelt to President Reagan, is committed to the security and stability of the Persian Gulf. And fourth, I am determined to protect the lives of American citizens abroad."²⁸ In addition to these stated objectives, there were also two implied objectives that are historically (circa 1990) associated with the Middle East: continue the erosion of Russian influence in the region and maintain access to cheap oil to fuel the U.S. and allied economies.

The first goal, the withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait was absolutely accomplished. U.S. and Coalition forces liberated Kuwait and drove the Iraqi Army out of country in less than 100 hours after the ground offensive

and reestablished the international border. There is no dispute over the attainment of this objective. It highlights the advantage of designating a geographic boundary as a goal in a "limited war."

Second, restoration of Kuwait's legitimate government was accomplished in tandem with the withdrawal of forces from Kuwait. Once again the Emir, Sheikh Jabair al Ahmed al Sabah, whose family had ruled Kuwait since 1978, was in power. Contrary to post-war criticisms, it was never the intent of the U.S. to restructure the Kuwaiti regime into a more representative democracy.

The third goal of establishing stability and security in the region was accomplished. Three major points were achieved: "a defanged Saddam has been forced to retreat behind his borders. His nuclear, biological and chemical capabilities have been destroyed and will stay that way..Saddam's forces suffered a crushing defeat and are no longer a threat to neighboring nations."²⁹ Many critics still contend that Saddam still poses a threat in the region. It is true, but a severely reduced one. His army has been attrited, his military prowess questioned, and the embargo and sanctions continue to throttle his military ventures.

The victory also provided increased stability for the region. The U.S. gained a considerable amount of credibility in the Arab community, by its participation and leadership of the Coalition forces. This new-found respect and the restraint of the Israeli's (who withheld retaliation

after Scud attacks) may have opened the doors for the peace talks at Madrid. Additionally, the Saudi's have agreed to allow the prepositioning of U.S. assets in the region. These developments are improving the stability and security of the Gulf. In response to the critics, had the U.S. hesitated or failed to act decisively the region's stability would have rapidly deteriorated.

The last of the stated objectives called for the protection of American citizens abroad. This was accomplished in two ways: American hostages were freed in the campaign. And the U.S. sent a clear signal that it would use military force as an option to protect American citizens.

The two implied objectives of checking Russian influence in the region and maintaining access to cheap oil were also accomplished. Russia through it's non-veto action in the U.N. and lack of direct support to Iraq abdicated considerable influence in the region. A major factor in this shift was it's own internal problems and the need for U.S. financial support to fund reforms. Access to oil was ensured with the Gulf victory and the improved relations with oil producers in the region.

WAS THE JOB FINISHED?

"Limited War" will always be subject to critical review and historical second guessing. Because the opponent is not totally vanquished and because resources and targets are restricted, their outcomes will inevitably be challenged.

There are five recurring issues that surface from the post-Gulf War reviews. First, why didn't we march to Baghdad? Coalition forces clearly had the opportunity to exploit military success and pursue the Iraqi forces into their capital. However, an invasion of Iraq and a drive to occupy Baghdad would have alienated the Arab world, potentially energizing increased fervor in radical Islamic movements (emphasizing Christian incursions into traditional Islamic holy-lands), placed the U.S. in a nation-building mode, and prolonged the combat and its associated losses.

The second issue involves the survival of Saddam's regime. Why didn't we overtly pursue his removal? Our British allies particularly resent this shortfall. In Prime Minister Thatcher's view Saddam had won. She espoused that Saddam was the aggressor and must be seen by his own people as having been defeated. She noted "that two years after the war, Bush was voted out of office and Thatcher had also been defeated, but the dictator Saddam still ruled."³⁰ But the removal of Saddam was never a stated objective, if it did happen it would be a welcomed windfall. If the U.S. had actively pursued his demise or removal it would have lost the backing of the Coalition. Additionally, it would have set a dangerous precedent in the region and lent increased credence to the anti-American sentiment.

The third issue centers on the total destruction of the Iraqi military. This would have created a dangerous power void in the region. Further crippling of Saddam's forces

might have opened the way for Iranian expansionism. General Powell was further concerned with massive destruction and slaughter along the Iraqi retreat route would tarnish the U.S. victory. Additionally, longstanding U.S. policy in the region favors maintaining the pre-war status quo.

The fourth issue involves revisions to the Kuwaiti regime. Many authors contend that we should not have reinstated the autocratic government of Kuwait. But the U.S. did not seek to restructure the sovereign government in Kuwait. To do so would threaten the region's ruling stability. Specifically, the monarchy in Saudi Arabia would have been in question for social reform.

The fifth issue involves the lack of support to the Kurd and Shi'ite rebellions. The U.S. tacitly supported these revolutionary movements. However, to support them militarily would also have set a precedent of U.S. meddling in the region's internal affairs. If the Kurds had been successful in northern Iraq and claimed an independent territory, there would be a potential conflict with Turkey, which could have led to significant NATO and Russian repercussions. The trend to break down nation-state borders to accomodate ethnic solidarity would have let the "genie out of the bottle" in the region.

EPILOGUE

In view of the magnitude of the Coalition victory in the Gulf War, it is disconcerting to accept the flood of criticisms regarding the "unfinished business" of the

campaign. The Gulf War clearly achieved the national objectives as articulated by President Bush. However, there were admittedly tactical shortfalls such as the failure to close the Basra pocket and significantly destroy the forces of the Republican Guard. But this was only a tactical shortfall, and did not hinder in the accomplishment of the national objectives. One could argue that Saddam had ample support in other military factions to solidify his regime. Given time, he would rebuild an elite "palace guard." In the long run, the destruction of the Republican Guard was not critical to the strategic victory achieved in the war.

Criticism regarding the moral issues of democracy and human rights are inevitable. Moral issues that drive us towards the use of military power open the Pandora's box. We should keep our objectives as visible and quantifiable as possible.

The U.S. military will be fighting in "limited wars" scenarios in the future. The growth of coalition warfare, need for international legitimacy, decreased resources, merging technology (precision guided munitions and target acquisition improvements), and the desire for expedient victories greatly enhance the option for "limited wars."

The Gulf War was a dynamic and decisive victory for Coalition forces. We should celebrate its success, learn from its shortfalls, and realize that the Middle East region is one of dynamic change. Old enemies might well be tomorrow's allies (such as Iran or Syria). We must look to

the future. The most significant product of the Gulf War may have been the positioning of the U.S. to influence the growing Islamic movement. This is the fastest growing religious and social movement in the world. Considering the population explosion and growing expectations of the region, initiating communications with Islamic clerical leaders may be logical. The Gulf War victory and the credibility of the Coalition will pay dividends for the United States in the future. The "limited war" lesson from Desert Storm is to define victory, declare it, and culminate it with a symbolic victory parade.

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